

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 3, 2015

9 – 11 a.m.

Room 319 City Hall

Meeting 5 Notes

Committee members present: Kathleen Boe, Hilary Dvorak, Tom Evers, Jessica Galatz, Cyndi Harper, Jeff Johnson, Dan Kenney, Doug Kress, Chris Linde, Bob Loken, Peter MacDonagh, Jesse Osendorf, Ben Shardlow, Sarah Stewart

[Please see [website](#) for Technical Advisory Committee Member affiliations]

Committee members excused: Brenda Bell-Brown, Leonard Bonacci, Sean Broom, Michael Hagen, Jenifer Hager, Tom Loftus, Nick Ngo, Heidi Ritchie, Patrick Sadler, Abdi Salah, Susan Segal, Rory Stierler, Julia Tabbut, Alene Tchourumoff, Melvin Tennant

Guests: Adam Arvidson, Bill Deef sitting in for Melvin Tennant

Staff/consultants present: Lydia Major, Kjersti Monson, Tyler Pederson, Jody Rader, Jennifer Ringold, Lacy Shelby, Marsha Wagner, Sarah Weeks

1. Welcome/Introduction of New Participants

Meeting 5 of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Kjersti Monson, Director, Long Range Planning, City of Minneapolis Community Planning & Economic Development (CPED). She invited any new TAC members to introduce themselves. Bill Deef, sitting in for Melvin Tennant representing Meet Minneapolis, was the only new member present.

Kjersti introduced herself and Lacy Shelby, Principal Urban Designer, Minneapolis CPED. Jennifer Ringold, Deputy Superintendent, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), introduced herself, Colleen O'Dell, Project Planner, and Tyler Pederson, Design Project Planner for the MPRB. Jennifer also introduced members of MPRB's consulting team, Lydia Major and Sarah Weeks from LHB and Adam Arvidson, MPRB's Director of Strategic Planning.

Kjersti said that with this meeting the TAC will begin to get into some of the tools that could be used to advance the ideas set forth in these meetings, but the bulk of this meeting will be focused on a parks exercise.

Jennifer thanked those who completed the online survey and provided input into the community engagement plan. From this input it appears that the project team is moving in the right direction, and also moving ahead with identifying participants for focus groups and stakeholder interviews. TAC members may receive requests for additional information or names over the next few weeks from Colleen O'Dell or Marsha Wagner. At the April meeting we will be hearing from MIG, another MPRB consultant working with LHB. At today's meeting the TAC will begin the work of beginning to identify activity and programming needs for parks in the downtown area.

Project Identity: Before continuing with the agenda items, Kjersti introduced the new name that has been developed for this initiative which will replace "DPRF/DSAMP": Pathways to Places – Shaping Downtown Together. She showed several graphic depictions [[PPT Page 3](#)], adding that it is rich with meaning since a main focus is to identify the paths and corridors component as well as the destinations and parks. "Pathways to Places" is representative of the actual work before the TAC as well as the roadmap that is being developed for policy and action. The important piece of "Shaping

Downtown Together” is providing a platform for coordination around actions and priorities but also around funding and programming. Kjersti acknowledged Jennifer’s team who helped create the wordmark, and said that a survey with the three versions of the wordmarks will be emailed to TAC members.

2. Report on Small Group Exercise

Lacy reviewed the feedback generated from the small group exercise at TAC Meeting #4 on February 3. Jody Rader, University of Minnesota research assistant, layered the different maps created by the small groups—representing needs of Visitors, Workers and Residents—and created two maps for each group, identifying separate park and public realm components. These maps will be posted on both the CPED and MPRB websites.

Following are some of the broader findings from the exercise:

- Residents Group [[PPT Page 4](#)]
 - Parks:
 - Improve connectivity to parks and river
 - A single park, constellation of parks or linear park?
 - Differentiate use of parks vs. plazas
 - Accommodate a range of users
 - Public Realm:
 - Address ground level retail gaps in Mill District
 - Explore and plan for a Loring Park to river connection
 - Identify “recreational” routes through downtown
- Visitors Group [[PPT Page 5](#)]
 - Parks:
 - Destinations for kids
 - Neighborhood scale parks
 - Wayfinding improvements to parks
 - Public Realm:
 - Differentiate between the day trip/drive-in vs. fly-in visitor experience
 - Plan for nightlife
 - Emphasize LRT connections (especially to Airport, University, St. Paul)
- Workers Group [[PPT Page 6](#)]
 - Parks:
 - Events catered to worker constituency
 - Improve connectivity to river
 - Untraditional parks
 - Public Realm:
 - Clarify shopping, health club, happy hour type destinations
 - Improve east/west corridor legibility
 - Enhance perception and access to river core

3. Implementation Tools

Kjersti introduced this section about the tools and mechanisms for delivering the identified parks/public realm components by discussing why public and private partnership is so important in delivering enhanced outcomes in the public realm. She noted a turning point in federal investment in infrastructure in the early 1980s under Ronald Reagan, New Federalism, which resulted in large scale disinvestment in infrastructure at the federal level. At that point federal grants for municipal capital projects became highly competitive, and there was a lot of pushback from cities who stated that infrastructure would suffer at a local scale as a result. It is now recognized that infrastructure in most

American cities is degrading, and cities are challenged to pay for annual maintenance on roads and bridges, let alone enhancements.

In the City of Minneapolis, just like in every other city, the Public Works Department has a long line of needed capital improvements that take precedence over public realm enhancements, which are highly desirable but do not compete well against bridge repair or pothole filling. This situation is seen all over the country, and cities have been very innovative in coming up with other ways to fund enhancements. Mechanisms like Business Improvement Districts or Special Service Districts are examples of ways that cities enable enhancement costs to be absorbed privately. In a time when cities are competing for talent and livability is a key factor, the ability to deliver a people-friendly city is increasingly strategically important.

Kjersti showed several slides [[PPT Pages 7-11](#)] documenting net domestic migration; people are moving from first tier to second tier cities, quite possibly due to cost of living issues. 25-to-34-year-old college-educated people are particularly mobile, and comprise the majority of net population growth in 19 of the top 25 most populous metros. If we are to meet our population goal, Minneapolis needs to compete for this demographic: the primary “movers,” drawn in large numbers to urban centers rather than suburbs, and characterizing the next generation of entrepreneurs. People are again choosing to live in cities, and businesses—particularly startups and young firms—are following them because that population represents their talent pools.

A question was asked about the definition of cities, whether it included just the city or the surrounding metropolitan area. Kjersti said preference data is for the urban center; they are moving into urban centers and businesses are following. This trend is apparent in the numbers.

Minneapolis has all of the things this particular demographic wants. Our CVI ([Creative Vitality Index](#)) outpaces the national average by five times. We have enormous investment in the arts, music and creative culture, and the number one park system which implies walkability, bikeability, recreation. We are diverse and progressive; the sixth most liberal city in the country, but we are not leveraging our diversity in terms of cultural destinations, entertainment and food. Minneapolis was ranked the fittest city, a measure of both physical fitness and access to nutritious food, by the American Fitness Index. We have a huge craft beer culture which is also a selling point. We have huge strength in the backbone of our regional economy with many homegrown Fortune 500 companies. Our GDP continues to grow; we have the 13th largest GDP in the country. We have the lowest unemployment rate among large metropolitan areas in the country. In terms of large metropolitan areas, Minneapolis has the fifth highest median household income. Accounting for cost of living, we’re number one for compensation in terms of Median Household Income, as the four cities ranked ahead of us on the list have a much higher Cost of Living Index score (COLI). [[PPT Pages 12-19](#)]

In spite of all of this, Minneapolis is underperforming in attracting this key demographic, falling well behind our competitive set: Denver, Austin, Seattle and Portland. We have a lot to offer but it is not legible to those outside of Minneapolis; we are not leveraging these assets well enough in attracting new residents. The four cities named above are pitching to youth culture (*Keep Austin Weird*, *Seattle Metro Natural*, Denver has found new energy for their *Mile High City* brand with legalization of marijuana, *Keep Portland Weird*). Kjersti recited a quote by Jeff Miller, CEO of Travel Portland in Oregon, the city’s convention and visitor bureau: “In size we might be a secondary city, but we’re thinking like a tier-one city now.”

Livability is a huge contributor to how cities compete for talent. With a highly mobile population, the first consideration in deciding to move is often, “Is it a job I want to do?”, and the second question is

invariably, “Is it a place I want to live?” Achieving a “yes” on that question for people considering a move to Minneapolis is what we are trying to get at with this initiative. [PPT Pages 20-24]

The implementation toolkit that the committee will explore through this initiative will begin to get at the fundamental concepts of public-private partnership, shared visioning, and collaboration. Ideas for what might be utilized include some things that are already in place, like Special Service Districts, the Downtown Improvement District, encroachment permits, and assessment. There are other things that could be explored: fee for service, lease or sublease revenue that would be dedicated to some of the goals, event revenue and programming, developer contributions, increment or penny tax (everything from value capture to TIF district to a statewide or hospitality tax – although these are a much heavier lift), and the new Parklet program. (When the Parklet program was launched in February, there were already twelve applicants in the pipeline. At \$20,000 per Parklet, that constitutes about \$240,000 of leveraged private investment to enhance the public realm.) [PPT Pages 25-26]

Work has been done to understand what is already in the toolbox. The TAC will help identify what new ideas are feasible to develop for a future toolkit. The planning team has categorized four types of tools that will be proposed to the TAC, and the TAC will consider each of them through the lens of their constituencies to determine if they are interesting or non-starters. The broad categories are [PPT Pages 27-30]:

- Revenue programs/Event Revenue: for instance, Bryant Park in New York has an enormous programming component which requires a big staff; it also has lease/sublease revenue
- Developer Contributions: for example, Chicago has impact fees; bonus programs like the privately-owned public space programs in New York; there is also the option of compelling developers to contribute to a corridor in some way (i.e., on Nicollet Mall the city requires ground floor retail)
- Increment or penny tax: Atlanta has a tax allocation district, Chicago has tax increment financing
- Credit/abatement programs: Can we provide tax abatement to encourage and incent certain kinds of investments in public realm enhancements, i.e. Atlanta’s urban enterprise zone?

Kjersti turned the presentation over to Lacy, who said the planning team has looked, nationally and internationally, at how other cities are making it possible to do another level of investment in the public right of way. It has become clear that a higher quality can be attained if some of these other programs are considered. TAC members and their constituents are being asked which of these categories people might be more amenable to. CPED will send out a survey that defines and better categorizes these, asking what elements would be interesting and should be explored further. Lacy also distributed a very short paper survey to TAC members, several of which were completed and returned to her at the end of the meeting.

Jennifer thanked CPED for proactively going after the next generation of individuals to live in Minneapolis versus just reacting to the trend. She said this is important as we move into the next exercise, adding that the project team is delighted by the information that has been given by the TAC to date. From that work MPRB has a good idea of where the gaps are, both in corridors as well as search areas for future parks. What will be accomplished in today’s small group exercise is to start to get an understanding of the types of activities and infrastructure, what we want to start envisioning within those areas for the different groups: Workers, Residents and Visitors. To prepare for that conversation, MPRB thought it would be helpful to look at existing Minneapolis parks, and also some nationwide examples of urban park trends.

4. Existing Parks and Services

Tyler presented on our existing parks and services [PPT Pages 31-32], stating that they are more than just green space but are back yards for many people, with a park basically within six blocks of just

about every home in Minneapolis. The Minneapolis park system contains 12 active gardens, 60 wading pools, and 215 playground structures. There are 51 miles of contiguous bike trails encircling the city; one can bike around the grand rounds without going on the streets very much. There are two million visits a year to the Stone Arch Bridge and riverfront; the Chain of Lakes receives five million visits a year. MPRB was voted by the Trust for Public Land in 2013 and 2014 as the number one park system. There are 48 recreation centers providing activities for children and seniors; they have computer rooms, gyms, host RecPlus (after school and summer program), sports leagues, pop-up parks, Nite Owlz (a place for kids to go until 11:00 or midnight rather than being on the streets), and last year provided 135,000 meals to kids under 18. MPRB foresters care for 600,000 trees, on boulevard and in the parks. They mow 4,660 acres of land using 75 riding mowers and 85 push mowers.

5. Trends for Urban Parks and Programs

Lydia said that there is a lot of excitement about where we are, and where we want to go with this initiative. The exercise today will get at idea generation: exploring, evolving, what happens next, how we imagine competing with first tier cities and our second tier set, and where we are heading next. The project team will be building on work done previously by this group and the Steering Committee (SC). The maps that will be used include information previously generated, and TAC members will be asked to imagine where to place potential new parks or different kinds of parks, explore enhancing the corridor so that parks feel more connected, and suggest ways to draw people into those areas.

Looking at other parks around the country, some urban park trends have been identified with examples given for each [\[PPT Pages 34-41\]](#):

- Sustainability: community, ecology, water, energy, materials, site selection, waste
- Management: park conservancies as management entities, public/private collaboration
- Management: conversion of parking lots to parks
- Funding: real estate development model, where parks are required to be self-sustaining through development or revenue-generation
- Temporary and found spaces: pop-up spaces, pavement to parks/parklets
- Public gardens and art: horticultural gardens and art installations integrated into parks
- Programming partnerships: arts, fitness, and education partners deliver programming
- Additional examples were given, including volunteering, mobile recreation, and others

A question was asked about the examples given, if they were located in cities where the parks department is a department of the city or more of an independent structure as it is here. Lydia answered that in most cases these are cities where the parks are part of the city structure. Minneapolis is fairly unique in the way that its parks are structured. In answer to a question about inherent advantages or disadvantages about parks being part of the city structure, Jennifer compared Minneapolis to Vancouver, British Columbia and Chicago, where parks departments are semi-autonomous. In the range of autonomy, Minneapolis is pretty far along the line of autonomy in terms of how it works. She said that many of the examples given are public/private partnership relationships, whether it be an independent developer or conservancy.

Regarding the park dedication fee that started in 2014, a question was asked about how much money was generated and what MPRB used the funds for. Jennifer replied that to date \$150,000 has been received in park dedication fees; many of the developments that were in queue went through the permitting process before the beginning of the year so they were exempt. MPRB anticipates more money to come in, and the funds will be directed to investments like this type of master planning, and individual planning that happens within other parks. The money will go toward new park development, not for operation of existing parks.

6. Park Possibilities Small Group Exercise

Jennifer introduced the small group exercise, explaining that there are seven search areas that have been identified by letter, A through G. [[PPT Page 42](#)] There are two additional categories: existing parks and non-MPRB owned spaces. TAC members will use four different colors of Post-it notes that are specific to four user groups: yellow=Visitors, pink=Residents, red=Workers, and teal=any/all groups.

Each group will identify one person to be a scribe and report to the group, and will consider the following questions:

- Imagine the downtown parks or public space 20 years from now. Who is using them? What are they doing?
- What types of new activities would bring different people to the downtown parks and public spaces?
- If you were creating the perfect space just for downtown workers, what would it look like/include? Where would it be? What about downtown residents? Visitors?

Jennifer explained that the next step would be to place the Post-it notes on the Park Opportunities chart by the specific area (A-G, existing parks, or non-MPRB owned property). A new board was added for those general ideas that would apply across the board, not specifically to any one area.

[LHB compiled the results of the small group exercise in a document which is appended to these meeting notes. Please see Appendix A for small group members and findings categorized by area.]

7. Upcoming Activities

- Lacy referenced the East Downtown Commons Park, mentioning that there's a [survey](#) online for people to give their comments. When the survey started on Monday there were almost one thousand respondents. The link will be emailed to TAC members.
- The city is sponsoring a Placemaking Workshop, [Community Connections](#), at the Convention Center [which was held] on Saturday, March 21.
- Jennifer mentioned the City Parks Alliance, a relatively new association that focuses specifically on urban core and true city-based parks. New York, Chicago, San Francisco, all of the big players both locally and internationally are beginning to follow this organization in general. They are having a conference in San Francisco April 10-14. The organization is not just park and recreation professionals, it also includes designers, funders, individuals who are doing conservancies, different approaches to urban parks in general and the public realm. That conference will come to Minneapolis-St. Paul in 2017. FFI <http://www.cityparksalliance.org/>.
- TAC meeting schedule (first Tuesday of every month through October 2015): April 7, May 5, June 2, July 7, August 4, September 8, October 6
- Steering Committee schedule: March 19, May 21, July 16

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:02 a.m.

This constitutes my understanding of items discussed and decisions reached.

If there are any omissions or discrepancies, please notify the author in writing.

Submitted by:

Marsha Wagner, CastleVisions

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